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Monday, 26 September 2011, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Thomson (Fiji), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.35 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Aurelia Frick, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Justice and Minister for Cultural Affairs of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Frick (Liechtenstein): It is a great honour to again address this Assembly, especially at the first general debate ever opened by a woman. What an inspiration! This debate has already proven that the General Assembly can indeed play a central role in multilateral diplomacy, in particular at this time of great change and turmoil.

I would like to express the solidarity of my country, Liechtenstein, with all of the peoples of the world that have, in recent months, sought to attain freedom from oppression and tyranny. We admire the courage of all of those women and men, young and old, who have stood up for their rights, often at great personal risk. We, the United Nations, must stand by them. I also wish to welcome South Sudan as the 193rd State Member of the Organization. The United Nations has yet again proven its ability to settle complex and violent conflicts by peaceful means.

Mr. Allam-mi (Chad), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The developments in northern Africa and the Middle East may have roots mainly in the lack of connections between Governments and their people. While they may be primarily internal in nature, there is also an international dimension to the rapid changes we are witnessing. The events since February have put the Organization itself to the test, and more challenges can be expected to occur.

In recent years we have sharpened tools and concepts that are essential in helping us solve or prevent conflicts. So how did we apply them during these challenging times?

First, how well did we carry out our commitment to protect civilians? The United Nations has made much progress in developing the concept of the responsibility to protect. The concept has three pillars: in the first instance, the primary responsibility of the State concerned, and then the second pillar, according to which other States have a responsibility to assist in the protection of civilians. In two recent instances, however, the international community has had to act under the last and third pillar. We commend the Security Council for taking swift action to protect civilians in Libya and in Côte d'Ivoire. In both instances, the Council authorized the use of force only as a last resort, but also without undue delay.

Some have criticized the actions taken and argued that they were aimed at regime change. Let us not forget, however, that the regimes in question had a

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choice. It was they who chose to attack civilians. It was they who forced the international community to act. At the same time, we sympathize with those who perceived a selective application of the responsibility to protect. As the stalemate in the Security Council on Syria showed, politics continues, at times, to trump principle. In response, however, we need more principled action, not more politics.

Secondly, have we lived up to our promise to ensure accountability for the worst crimes? Have we lived up to the promise of "Never again!", which we gave in the aftermath of Rwanda and Srebrenica? Once more, the international response to crimes committed in Libya has provided a glimmer of hope. The Security Council's unanimous referral of the Libya situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC) was a historic decision. The ICC responded appropriately with swift action. Furthermore, the Court is also undertaking preliminary investigations regarding Côte d'Ivoire. The central role played by the Court in those situations and in many others has illustrated the profound paradigm shift brought about by the Rome Statute.

The core principle of that shift is now firmly entrenched in the fabric of international law: there must be accountability for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. But accountability has not yet arrived everywhere that it is needed. Serious allegations of crimes committed in Sri Lanka and in Syria, for instance, have not yet found an appropriate and transparent justice mechanism. Again, the primary responsibility to ensure an end to impunity falls on the States concerned. International mechanisms, such as the ICC, can and must only become active where States fail to live up to their responsibilities.

Thirdly, how effective have we been in using mediation as a tool in the peaceful settlement of disputes? This topic, which was rightfully chosen as the central theme of the presidency, is at the very heart of the Organization's mandate. We support the Secretary-General's call to raise prevention from an abstract concept to a core operating principle. It is simply paradoxical that only a small fraction of the Secretariat's resources is dedicated to mediation, while we spend $7 billion per year on peacekeeping.

In many situations, the good offices provided by neutral and trusted actors, such as envoys of the Secretary-General, can make a real difference on the ground. Such actions involve highly intense, often heroic efforts, which deserve much stronger support from us as Member States. Mediation efforts are increasingly influenced by accountability mechanisms. The General Assembly itself acknowledged this fact in its first ever resolution on strengthening mediation, where it emphasized, that "justice is a fundamental building block of sustainable peace" (*resolution 65/283, thirteenth preambular paragraph*).

In this new age of accountability, mediators can never offer amnesty from criminal prosecution or withdraw arrest warrants issued by the ICC. That is not only a matter of principle, but a matter of law. The ICC would never be bound by such promises. At times, the imperatives of peace and justice may compete with each other temporarily and make the mediator's job more difficult. Over the long run, however, they are not only compatible, but mutually reinforcing. That message is sent around the globe upon each ratification of the Rome Statute. And we are particularly happy to note that the message has been sent 118 times so far, most recently by the Philippines and the Maldives.

Fourthly, have we done enough to include women in efforts at conflict prevention and resolution and to make them agents of change, instead of bystanders? Have we done enough to protect them during conflict, in particular, from sexual violence? We have collectively sent strong signals in this regard. Liechtenstein particularly supports the Security Council's work on women, peace and security. We welcome the new focus on the role of women brought about by the creation of UN-Women. Women have been a driving force in the Arab Spring. But as some countries transition to a new era, women risk being left behind once again.

The United Nations is often involved in transitional processes. It must ensure a strong role for women and apply a gender perspective. Most important, the United Nations must lead by example and appoint more women as leaders in mediation and other transitional processes. It was therefore with great pleasure that I signed the joint statement on advancing women's political participation, earlier today.

Regarding the protection of women and girls from sexual violence, we place high hopes in the new monitoring and reporting mechanism. Expert teams will help strengthen domestic accountability mechanisms. The greatest responsibility, however, lies with peacekeepers on the ground. They are mandated

to go into harm's way and protect civilians. They must fulfil that mandate even more effectively when faced with situations of sexual violence. Most important though, we must once and for all eradicate all instances of sexual abuse committed by peacekeepers themselves. It is not enough to simply repatriate Blue Helmet soldiers who have committed such crimes. Zero tolerance for sexual abuse must finally become a reality.

Fifthly, have we done enough to address the root causes of the unrest in many countries, including poverty, unemployment, corruption, lack of freedom and human rights? Those root causes and the strong popular opposition against them, remind us of a simple truth: economic and social development are inextricably linked with good governance, human rights and the rule of law.

The international community has many tools at its disposal to assist countries in reforming their systems of governance. We strongly support United Nations activities to promote the rule of law and combat corruption and make financial contributions to that end. There is no shortage of assistance and capacity-building programmes. What is needed is greater political will to actually make use of them. It is, however, the task of the United Nations to improve the manner in which rule-of-law assistance programmes are delivered and coordinated. We would welcome a stronger role for the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group in this regard, and hope that progress can be made at next year's high-level meeting on the rule of law.

The events of recent months have shown us once again how irresistible the call for freedom can be. And they have shown us, once more, how indispensable the Organization is when it comes to assisting peoples that aspire to such freedom through democracy. Despite all the criticism, I am convinced that the United Nations has in recent years become more effective in delivering on its mandate. If we work together here, we will achieve results much more efficiently than through individual actions. Great opportunities lie ahead of us — let us accept the challenge.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Samuel Santos López, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

Mr. Santos López (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): At this general debate of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, I convey to the Assembly a Christian, socialist greeting of solidarity from the people of Nicaragua and Comrade President Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra. We trust that our work will contribute to strengthening the Organization through an appropriate focus on its purposes, principles and possible contributions so that we can successfully deal with the challenges before us as a community of States, peoples and nations.

One year ago, during our discussions at the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, we extensively addressed the serious and multifaceted international crisis experienced by humankind. At that time we called it an apocalyptical crisis. One year later, the evolution of world events has confirmed our profoundest fears that our civilization is now at a critical stage and that peace between States and peoples is dangerously at risk.

Expectations that the international economic and financial situation would improve have dissipated before the relentless reality of a profound crisis; its gravest effects still continue to affect deeply our peoples. The international financial system, which is controlled by speculators, again plunged into a tailspin. The measures taken have had a temporary, non-lasting effect owing to the ever increasing greed of bankers. We are now witnessing the effects of the United States internal debt problem, which has generated great losses in most exchange markets.

At present, as before, we affirm that we reject the language of war between peoples and we reject war as a means to resolve conflicts between States. In the light of the events in the brotherly Arab socialist popular republic of Libya, we reiterate our declaration of principle and express our solidarity with the brotherly Libyan people.

The blunt and shameful manipulation of Security Council resolution 1973 (2011) regarding Libya — the illegal war being carried out by NATO members — is the most recent example of the pathological need of particular States to attempt to subordinate the peoples of the world at any cost. It is the most recent example of attacks against the sovereignty of a State Member of the United Nations in violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

Nicaragua expresses its firmest rejection of the use of the misnamed responsibility to protect in order to intervene in our countries, bomb civilians and

change free and sovereign governments. We cannot allow the imposition of this new model of imperialist aggression nor the continued aggression against our peoples. Interference and intervention will not resolve crises; only dialogue and negotiation among brothers and sisters will resolve political crises among peoples.

The unacceptable policy of double standards has become a constant of those Powers, which clearly aspire to hegemony. Where are those countries, the supposed defenders of oppressed peoples, the self-proclaimed civilian protection apostles, when an attempt is being made to recognize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, their right to live in peace, their right to a sovereign State enjoying full recognition as a State Member of the United Nations? This is clearly an instance of double morals, double standards. After six decades of conflict, the Palestinian people are now to be denied their right to a State, while a mere 10 days ago, with unheard of haste and, I must note, a certain irony, the General Assembly recognized a transitional council that has not yet formed a Government.

We reject the logic of denying the very existence of a Palestinian State. From the moment of triumph of our revolution in 1979 — the Sandinista revolution — Nicaragua has been a proud witness to the noble struggle of the Palestinian people and their substantial concessions aimed at achieving peace.

Before the General Assembly, Nicaragua ratifies its recognition of the Palestinian State within its 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. We call, here and now, for the proclamation of Palestine as the 194th State Member of the United Nations. Recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people can only serve to promote Middle East peace and stability. At present, more than ever, such recognition must become a reality. Clearly, Palestine's right is linked to the existence of the State of Israel, a State we recognize in juridical and political terms. May both States exist, so that both peoples may live in peace and work for their well-being and development: That is the universal appeal.

Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly for more than two decades have demanded an end to the United States of America's economic embargo against Cuba. They must be fully implemented. Despite expectations, the facts confirm that nothing has changed. Sanctions against Cuba remain intact and are rigorously implemented. That criminal blockade violates international law; it is contrary to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and constitutes a crime against a sovereign State's right to peace, development and security. In its essence and its objectives, it is an act of unilateral aggression and a permanent threat to a country's stability.

Despite that criminal blockade, Cuba continues daily to strengthen its solidarity and fraternal relations with all peoples of the world. Cuba's armies of white coats and educators are ever more numerous in demonstrating their country's solidarity. We also echo the call for an end to the injustice against the five Cuban heroes who have been unjustly imprisoned for 13 years as of this past 12 September, for having alerted their people to the activities of terrorist organizations against Cuba.

As unlikely as it may seem, the process of decolonization has not ended, and there remain entire peoples who have been denied their right to independence and self determination. We welcome and maintain our solidarity with the peoples of Puerto Rico, the Western Sahara and the struggle of the Frente Polisario and with Argentina with regard to the occupation of the Malvinas Islands.

Observations made in the Assembly in 2010 regarding the need to achieve a balance between human beings and Mother Earth remain relevant; they have even led us to conclude that, far from diminishing, pressures on the planet have increased; threats have escalated and real and potential dangers have multiplied.

Among those, the Fukushima disaster in Japan had the virtue of bringing into view the chilling global risk of radiation. The Japanese crisis has rightly been described as a nuclear war without war. Its present and future repercussions, which have not yet been fully established, are considered by recognized scientists to be more serious than those of the Chernobyl disaster.

While expressing our solidarity with the Government and the heroic people of Japan — the victims of the earthquake that levelled their territory and those affected by the Fukushima accident — we vehemently call on States with nuclear reactor installations to take all measures to avoid similar accidents that would gravely endanger people's health and would harm the environment.

The upcoming Durban Climate Change Conference and the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development will provide renewed opportunities — which we must not allow ourselves to squander — to truly break with destructive logic and redirect humankind towards development that is in harmony with Mother Earth and respectful of the lives of the 7 billion human beings now populating the planet.

We all know that we have been incapable of achieving an accord on climate change. Although the sixteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change established a Green Fund and called for the mobilization of financing for developing countries, that accord is far from addressing the serious damage being done to the environment and Mother Earth or the historical responsibility of the developed countries, which are bent on dealing a final blow to the Kyoto Protocol so as to continue their uncontrolled emissions of greenhouse effect gases.

In Rio and in Durban we will be called upon to renew our political will and adopt genuine, concrete commitments based on previous progress and commitments. The issue is of transcendental importance for our planet and for human beings. Development must not sacrifice life. We recall that the Universal Declaration on the Common Well-Being of Mother Earth and of humankind is an essential guide for our debates and actions.

Looking at other issues, Nicaragua salutes the international community's invitation to Taiwan to participate in the assemblies of United Nations specialized agencies directly related to the well-being of the 23 million Taiwanese. We urge other international forums to adopt similar positions.

The global economic and financial crisis has compounded the already serious food crisis, primarily in impoverished countries. We know that this crisis also has structural causes in the present capitalist development model — a model that discourages internal production and impedes technology transfer to the agricultural sector of impoverished countries, a model without available credit or technical training for small and medium producers, which results in production difficulties.

Climate change has become an additional major factor in the deepening of the food crisis. The trend towards higher oil prices at the international level has caused some countries with an agricultural base to begin producing biofuel. That phenomenon has significantly changed food supply and demand and has reinforced the trend toward higher prices.

From the ethical point of view, as well as political, economic and social, it is essential to take immediate concerted action to avoid the continuing increase in the number of hungry people and to develop sustainable policies for guaranteeing food security worldwide.

We renew our commitment to the cause of general and complete disarmament. It is imperative that we establish peace on Earth and provide the 7 billion human beings who inhabit it, and Mother Earth itself, with the opportunity to survive the destructive tendencies promoted by the dominant economic model, so that humankind may develop in an environment conducive to manifesting our enormous spiritual and material capacities. No other way will enable us to achieve a better future.

It is therefore unjustifiable and unacceptable that the present world continues to spend more on the development and testing of all types of weapons and less on protecting the life and development of human beings. While millions of persons suffer the effects of the economic and financial crisis, global military expenditures have skyrocketed. Over the past 10 years, those expenditures have increased by 50 per cent, to $1.5 trillion today. More than 8 million small arms and light weapons and more than 16 billion munitions are produced every year, the equivalent to more than 2.5 munitions for every single person on the planet. That arms proliferation causes irreparable direct and indirect harm to peoples and their economies.

We can end that proliferation if we decide to. It is not true that the arms sector is vitally important to the world economy. In fact, despite what the producers of small arms and light weapons would have us believe, their trade and the trade in munitions and components represent less than 0.01 per cent of the world's industrial transactions.

We are firmly convinced that because the Korean peninsula remains a focal point of international tension, any solution must take place through goodwill and sincere dialogue between the parties in order to maintain peace and stability.

The factors called new threats to security have become an outright scourge for most of our countries. Drug trafficking, human trafficking, illegal arms trafficking, and the trafficking of immigrants, among others, constitute ethical, political and economic challenges for Central America, which is stigmatized today in some international reports as one of the most violent regions on Earth. That stigmatization is deliberate and carries serious consequences for our countries. It transforms us into protagonists of the problem rather than the victims we truly are, victims of the lucrative businesses that constitute those new threats. Through transnational networks they utilize our territories as a bridge from South to North and from North to South, in a dance of millionaires as thousands of people are assassinated along illegal routes and porous borders.

The International Conference of Support for the Central American Security Strategy, held in Guatemala last June, exposed the seriousness of a situation that exists not only in our region, but in all of the countries of the world. That is why the principle of shared but differentiated and proportional responsibility must guide mutual commitments. It is urgent that we move in the right direction before it is too late for us all.

Nicaragua is going through a time of change aimed at reversing the negative effects of 16 long years under neoliberal Governments. We are recovering values, restoring rights, strengthening capacities and constructing a new model based on replacing the neoliberal model of untrammeled capitalism with one based on Christian, socialist and solidarity principles. We are articulating popular democracy through the national human development plan. Together these constitute the backbone of a new phase of the Sandinista revolution.

These achievements are due in large part to Nicaragua's integration into the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas, an initiative stemming from the genius of Fidel Castro, the Commander in Chief of the Cuban revolution, and of Commander-President Hugo Chávez Frías. This brotherhood, unique in today's world, enables solidarity, complementarity and fair trade between our peoples and advances the historical cultural unity of our peoples.

At the same time, our national human development plan is aimed specifically at promoting the country's economic and social health by adding jobs and reducing poverty and inequality, on a basis of sovereignty, security and integration. The restoration of the human and constitutional right of all Nicaraguans to free education is reflected in the fact that, in a country with a total population of 6.5 million, 1,821,682 students are now enrolled in schools. This year we are launching the battle for universal primary education, aiming at universal sixth grade education by 2012. The goal is to achieve universal enrolment in the third year of secondary school by 2015.

The restoration of the human and constitutional right of the Nicaraguan people to free health care means providing better access to, and improving the quality of, health services, reducing maternal and infant mortality, paying more attention to the development of young people, expanding community family health services, and the first large-scale registering of people with disabilities. Our Programa Amor is designed for boys and girls under six years old and for street children and adolescents, and those who work during school terms, in order to restore to them their fundamental rights.

In structural areas, we are making progress in transforming the energy matrix so that by 2017, 90 per cent of energy will be from renewable sources and 10 per cent from fossil fuels, radically inverting the pyramid we inherited in 2006. We are enjoying macroeconomic stability, with gross national product growth projected at 4 per cent or more. Our improvement policies have increased direct foreign investment in our country's strategic sectors. We have had outstanding successes in confronting drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. Nicaragua is now recognized as one of the safest countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the safest in Central America. We have had indisputable successes in reducing poverty and inequality, as has been recognized by international financial institutions.

We are fervent supporters of the integration and unity of Central America, Latin America and the Caribbean. Within the framework of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, we are securing our model through complementarity, investments, fair trade and solidarity.

With our neighbours and brothers in Honduras and El Salvador, we are working together for the sustainable development of the Gulf of Fonseca.

Comrade President Daniel Ortega Saavedra has also made several approaches to the Government and people of our neighbour to the south, Costa Rica, concerning the possibility of joint development of our common border, particularly in terms of protecting and restoring the environment and working on sustainable economic and social development for the benefit of both our peoples. Throughout this process, young people and women have been at the forefront of the direct democracy model that is the essence and continuity of the Sandinista revolution.

Nicaragua can demonstrate the profound, concrete and verifiable economic, social, political, legislative and cultural achievements our people are undergoing. In the context of the serious crises that so many countries, developed and developing, are going through, our Christian, socialist, solidarity model is an inspiration for an ever better future.

We are aware of our difficulties and limitations. We know that the weight of the historical structure that we inherited is still a liability that we must cast off in our national development process. The burdens of poverty and underdevelopment require sound policies and sustained effort and political and governing systems that have the necessary commitment to our people's aspirations. I can assure the Assembly that through our Government of national reconciliation and unity we will achieve that and more.

As we have said before, it is not easy for developing countries such as ours to deal with an issue of the breadth and depth of the global economic and financial crisis. We have yet to recover from the harsh effects of the last wave, while the new threat of another and greater crisis is bearing down on us. According to the International Monetary Fund, Central America's response to the previous world economic and financial crisis was in large part successful. We were able to deal with the situation successfully — success with costs that in Nicaragua's case were not passed on to the poorest, because the measures we adopted were based on the interests of our country as a whole.

As we consider international developments, we must also turn our attention to our own Organization. Global democratization must be accompanied by democratization of the United Nations without further delay.

In his book *La reinvención de la ONU: una propuesta*, our comrade and friend, the former President of the Assembly, General Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann — who is with us here — states that it is urgent that we give true meaning to democracy and independence in the United Nations, so that the opinions of all can be heard and so that those opinions really count in the decision-making process, with no one being excluded.

This proposal, adopted by our national reconciliation and unity Government, consists of proposals on the United Nations charter, the statute of the International Court of Justice and the statute for the International Tribunal for Climate Justice and Environmental Protection, as well as a proposal on a draft universal declaration on the common good of mother earth and humankind.

Reinvention and re-grounding are key concepts that will pave the way for an international system based on genuine multilateralism that is in harmony with the changes the world has undergone during the past few decades. We must restore a true political dimension to international law and to the rights of people.

Developed societies are sinking into the despair caused by unemployment, the lack of social security, financial insolvency, the implosion of established labour rights and an uncertain future. Global Powers are waging wars of aggression with no moral or political base, causing material destruction and enormous human suffering. Economic and financial recovery are nowhere in sight; on the contrary, specialists foresee a recession even more serious than the one we have recently experienced.

Where do we find the solution we so urgently need? Where do we regain hope in the possibility of a different present and future world, in which there is peace between States and nations? In which development efforts and impressive scientific and technological advances are equitably shared? In which, as the Greek sophist Protagoras put it, man is the measure of all things?

According to many prominent thinkers on the global reality, the final crisis of the capitalist development model has arrived. There is no time for reforms. As Leonardo Boff has said,

> "We need to find another way of thinking, one based on principles and values that can sustain a new test of civilization. If not, we will have to

accept a path that leads straight to the edge of the precipice. Dinosaurs already took that path."

Nicaragua is proceeding on the belief that a better future is possible if only we are capable of steering in a new direction, if we struggle for justice and peace, and if we commit ourselves to the development and defence of the common good of the Earth and of humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Basile Ikouebe, Minister for Foreign Affairs and of la Francophonie of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to take the floor from this rostrum on behalf of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso.

This past week, in this place, we took part in High-level Meetings that addressed the major concerns at the very heart of the actions of the United Nations and those of its Member States: non-communicable disease; the situation in Libya; desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty; the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance; nuclear safety; and terrorism. Clearly, the conclusions that we reached at those meetings reflect not only the political will and commitment of Member States to provide collective responses to those concerns, but also corroborate our faith in multilateralism.

In unison we have welcomed the Republic of South Sudan, and we congratulate them on concluding, after many years of patience, the long and laborious process of negotiation that brought us the 193rd State Member of the United Nations. In joining the warm words of welcome expressed by the delegations before me, I wish to reiterate the Congo's support for this young brother country and to underscore the commitment of my Government to develop close ties of friendship and cooperation with it.

Since its creation, the United Nations has put a great deal of effort into the noble endeavour of freeing peoples still under the yoke of colonialism and domination. The history of the United Nations is intertwined with the emancipation of peoples. The time has therefore come to do justice to the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. The Congo hopes to see a sovereign Palestinian State emerge, master of its own fate, in this great universal family, within secure and guaranteed borders and living in peace alongside the people of the State of Israel in a spirit of good neighbourliness and cooperation.

With respect to the situation in Libya, particularly as regards the consequences for the subregion, we agree that the restoration of peace and security remains a high priority. For this reason, I wish to express my Government's support for the United Nations Support Mission in Libya.

In the quest for a peaceful solution to the Libyan crisis, the Congo, together with other African States members of the Ad Hoc High-level Committee of the African Union, urges the authorities of the National Transitional Council to meet their commitments, particularly with respect to preserving national unity; involving all Libyan stakeholders, without exception, in rebuilding the country; protecting foreigners, particularly African migrant workers; and opening an inclusive political process for ending the crisis.

In our immediate neighbourhood, both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cameroun will hold major elections in several weeks. My delegation would like to see that process take place smoothly, in calm and peace, in order to help democracy take root and to strengthen political stability.

The intolerable situation in the non-State of Somalia and the ongoing civil war that has been under way for 20 years, along with the unprecedented humanitarian crisis, once again challenge the international community. We encourage the Transitional Federal Government to continue and strengthen its efforts to achieve peace within the framework of the Djibouti Agreement, with the participation of all groups that wish to cooperate, and to renounce armed violence. Here, I would like to commend the actions of the African Union Mission to Somalia, particularly for having made it possible to secure Mogadishu.

Mr. Kőrösi (Hungary), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We welcome the wave of international solidarity for the Horn of Africa. In keeping with this

momentum, the Congo has made a contribution for the victims of the drought in Somalia.

The President has properly placed the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes at the centre of the general debate. For the prevention and resolution of conflicts, this is indeed a necessary tool that has proven itself over the years and in all areas.

The experience of mediation in Africa since the independence of the African States is replete with lessons regarding the role of this mechanism in settling the numerous internal crises or inter-State conflicts that our countries have experienced. In the past, the Organization of African Unity used meditation almost systematically. Today, the African Union continues to benefit from it. Furthermore, mediation is consistent with the African culture and tradition of dialogue. It is by drawing from the very source of this tradition that the Congo was able to launch a productive internal dialogue that enabled it to overcome the socio-political turmoil of the 1990s.

The relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter enshrine the obligation of Member States to seek, in any dispute,

> "a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice".

These provisions offer a wide range of possibilities from among which to select the means appropriate to bring about a peaceful settlement.

Today more than ever, the quest for peace by negotiation remains the only way to guarantee lasting peace. The threat or use of force should be considered only after having exhausted all possible political solutions. The Security Council should therefore strictly limit the conditions under which the use of force is authorized so as to avoid any manipulation or deterioration of a situation.

Similarly, the abuse of the international justice system, which has become a political weapon targeting Africa in particular, is a dangerous aberration that must be corrected.

Beyond its main theme, the current session is being held, as have preceding sessions, at a time in our shared history when the United Nations is solidly mobilized around its three main pillars of activity, namely, international peace and security, economic development and sustainable development, as well as the related aspects of protecting the environment and human rights. With respect to the range of challenges old and new that the United Nations is expected to meet, it will be viewed as effective and legitimate only if it adapts to the new realities of our world.

United Nations reform is therefore urgent. It must be based on the principles of democracy, justice and equality. The position of the African Union on Security Council reform is well known in this body. The reforms will be contingent on the willingness of all Member States to make the Organization an institution that embodies modern values and that is open to the future.

In order for the United Nations to effectively and efficiently fulfil its key role in steering global affairs, its Member States must carry out reforms, first to restore the central role of the General Assembly as the most representative deliberative body, and then to foster the participation of more developing countries in the decision-making process.

The global challenges identified by heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit, held in September 2000, include sustainable development and environmental protection. These issues have figured prominently in international negotiations for many years and influence the implementation of the two United Nations framework conventions on the environment.

The causes of climate change and their impact on human life and the environment are well known. Regardless of the explanations proffered, environmental pollution is caused by human activity. Consequently, we hope that the negotiations on a post-Kyoto climate regime will conclude with the adoption, at the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held soon in Durban, of an international instrument that could be opened for signature at the Rio+20 Conference.

In Central Africa, the countries of the Congo Forest Basin, for their part, have made a commitment to sustainably manage their forests through conservation, forest certification, combating illegal logging, good forest governance, the gradual streamlining of the logging industry and implementation of the process to reduce emissions

from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. This effort, which should be continued, has resulted in very low deforestation rates. This is one of Central Africa's major contributions to global efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. The international community should support and encourage it.

On the initiative of the Republic of the Congo, the first summit on the world's three tropical forest ecosystems was held in Brazzaville from 29 May to 3 June. That summit, which brought together the countries of the Amazon, South-East Asia and Congo Basins, resulted in the conclusion of a cooperation agreement on these three tropical forest ecosystems with the support of United Nations agencies and other partners. The agreement is to be signed in Rio de Janeiro on the sidelines of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in June 2012. In that regard, I wish to express the gratitude of the Congolese Government to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his personal support to this initiative.

As the Assembly is aware, the conservation and sustainable management of forests requires substantial human, material and financial resources, which forest developing countries do not have. Those countries are desperately awaiting the release of the "fast start" funds that developed counties announced at Copenhagen and the delivery of the innovative, predictable and permanent sources of funding agreed at Cancún, as well as technology transfer and capacity-building.

In mentioning these climate and environmental issues, I cannot but think of Mrs. Wangari Maathai, who passed away yesterday. I pay tribute to the memory of this first Nobel Prize-winning woman of African politics, who the world will remember as an avant-garde activist in the fight to protect the environment. Her commitment to reforestation and restoring biodiversity won her the recognition of the countries of Central Africa, who designated her as a Goodwill Ambassador for the Congo Basin Forest. I should like to take this opportunity to express my deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Kenya, as well as to the family of the deceased.

The events taking place in the Arab world are replete with lessons, as were the enormous changes that transformed the European landscape after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in 1989. Everywhere, the hymn of freedom and democracy has resounded. We know that the overthrow of a political regime does not necessarily bring freedom and democracy. They must be won and nurtured by other victories that cannot be imposed from without. The world has changed and we must face the facts inherent in these new geopolitical challenges, which have led to the emergence of new forces on the international stage. Freedom of expression thrives here, in the United Nations. Let democracy not stop on its threshold. The United Nations must be the sanctuary of those who are building the future. A safer, fairer and more prosperous world for all will then emerge.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Georges Rebelo Chikoti, Minister of External Relations of Angola.

Mr. Chikoti (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his election to preside over the work of the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session and to assure him of Angola's support and cooperation in ensuring success in the work of this session. I also want to express our gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for the competent and impartial manner in which he conducted the proceedings of the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

Allow me to also congratulate the Secretary-General on his reappointment and to assure him of my Government's support for the success of his very complex and demanding mission in the service of peace and cooperation among nations, a cornerstone of the mandate embodied in the Charter of the Organization.

We congratulate the Republic of South Sudan on its admission as a Member of the United Nations. We wish South Sudan a future of peace and prosperity and would like to say that the Government of Angola stands ready to cooperate with this new State's efforts to consolidate its independence and its socio-economic development.

We also welcome the establishment of UN-Women. We are certain that it will give further impetus to the promotion and empowerment of women and the achievement of their legitimate rights.

This session of the General Assembly takes place at a particularly complex juncture in the international situation, which is characterized by so many crises that

I believe it is not an exaggeration to say that they challenge the very foundations of our international Organization. If we were to list them, although not exhaustively, we could mention the current economic and financial crisis, which triggered the most serious social crisis witnessed to date by our generation; a dangerous environmental crisis of unpredictable consequences for the future of humankind, which will be irreversible unless the international community as a whole applies immediate and courageous measures; and a general escalation of violence and outbreak of conflict, which, combined with the environmental crisis, has caused the most serious humanitarian crisis that humankind has witnessed since the end of the Second World War. In brief, we are living in dangerous times, where a combination of factors is endangering stability, peace and security in the world.

The analysis of the current international situation made by the majority of the speakers who preceded me, and which we agree with, constitutes an appeal to our collective responsibility.

A particularly disturbing factor is the current economic and financial crisis, which has affected virtually every country in the world, in particular developing countries, with serious consequences for political stability and social cohesion.

It is therefore urgent that we find solutions to these problems. That will require strengthening international cooperation on the basis of greater justice and equality. Moreover, it is urgent that we take measures aimed at deepening economic reforms within States that promote economic growth and social development.

Angola is extensively affected by the international economic and financial crisis. We have therefore adopted a set of measures to mitigate its most adverse effects. Without prejudice to the maintenance of macroeconomic balance, we have focused considerable resources on social development and combating poverty.

The theme of this session of the General Assembly — "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes through peaceful means" — reflects the deep concern of the international community with regard to the need for an integrated approach to resolving conflicts that affect it. That is what makes it necessary to implement mediation efforts after conflicts have started. Conflict prevention should be the key element in the management of any area of tension.

Respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, the rule of law and good governance are key elements in ensuring that any human society can live in peace and harmony. They are also the main guarantors of effective conflict prevention.

There are other elements I would like to mention that are also important causes of the spread of conflict. I am referring here to external interference, which, in gross violation of international law, frequently obstructs efforts at mediation and peaceful resolution and prevents the reaching of solutions to conflicts.

Angola has paid a very high price as a result of such interference, which for too long compounded a fratricidal conflict that Angolans were finally able to settle and wisely overcome with magnanimity, fairness and inclusion, thanks to the leadership of our President. The role of Angola and its contribution to internal and regional peace should be seen in the broader context of conflict resolution. In that regard, the implementation of the landmark Security Council resolution 435 (1978) led to the independence of Namibia and created the conditions for peaceful coexistence in a region that had endured extreme hostility and constituted a permanent threat to world peace.

Imbued with a spirit of fraternity, the Government of Angola has spared no effort in pursuing its policy of effective reconciliation, which has allowed the reconciliation of all its children who were previously involved in the conflict. There has been genuine investment in peace, which has been a decisive factor in the process of post-conflict reconstruction. Angola has served as a reference point for the resolution of several conflicts on the African continent. Moreover, we have spared no effort in sharing our experiences with other peoples and countries.

Also in the context of conflict resolution, it is important to strengthen the role of multilateralism while adhering to the principle of shared responsibility and shared benefits, recognizing the legitimate interests of all parties and engaging in consultations and dialogue in the search for workable solutions to international peace and security issues.

There is therefore a need to refer to the instruments of cooperation between the Security Council and the African Union, as well as to the role of

the United Nations and regional institutions in preventing and resolving conflicts. It is of crucial importance to strengthen the action of regional organizations in the management of situations that may constitute threats to peace and security. In that connection, the Security Council has the primary role in preventing and resolving conflicts and in maintaining peace, in accordance with the powers conferred upon it by the Charter of the United Nations.

The central theme of our debate has drawn attention to the need for reform of the Security Council, including the imperative of achieving fair representation for all regions and increasing the number of permanent members, thereby adapting the Council to contemporary reality.

With regard to peaceful cooperation at the regional level, Angola is a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of Central African States, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), which, with several partners, has acted on the basis of preventive diplomacy in the search for peaceful solutions to the various crises that have arisen.

With regard to the constitutional crisis in Madagascar, SADC mediated the recent signing by all parties involved of the road map for the implementation of the reconciliation process, which is intended to lead to elections and the restoration of constitutional order. That was an important breakthrough in the process, which Angola welcomes.

Guinea-Bissau, our brotherly country and partner in the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, has been the subject of special attention by Angola. As part of the CPLP, Angola and other member States have striven to establish a strategic partnership with the Economic Community of West African States under the coordination of the United Nations, aiming to bring political stability to the country so that it can carry out major structural reforms, in particular the reform of the defence and security sectors. We welcome the positive developments that the.country is now experiencing and we encourage the authorities of Guinea-Bissau to vigorously pursue the process of stabilization.

The drought in the Horn of Africa is a cause of deepest concern for my country and the entire international community. The consequences of drought in Somalia are felt even more profoundly due to the prevalence of armed conflict, which compounds the humanitarian crisis, shocks the world's conscience and calls for a redoubled effort by the international community. Angola has joined the international humanitarian assistance efforts under way, as well as the search for political solutions to end the armed conflict and open new prospects for a better future for the Somali people.

With regard to the situation in Libya, the Angolan Government hopes that the Libyan people can find stability in the very near term. That can only be achieved through the free exercise of their democratic rights. In that regard, Angola urges the National Transitional Council to promote genuine national reconciliation and to form an inclusive Government, as those are prerequisites for ensuring that Libya can regain its rightful place in the African and international arenas. However, we must make use of lessons learned with a view to achieving more effective cooperation between external partners and the African Union in seeking joint solutions based on international law and mutual respect.

Angola remains concerned about the limited progress in addressing the problem of Western Sahara, which remains an important issue on the international agenda. We call on the warring parties to resume negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union, so that the people of Western Sahara can exercise their right to self-determination.

The situation in the Middle East, particularly in the Palestinian territories, is one of the most serious problems facing the international community. Angola is witnessing with great concern the escalation of the conflict and the lack of progress towards a solution of the Palestinian question. In line with the general position of the international community regarding the conflict, my country advocates the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, living side by side with the State of Israel, in peace and security, within secure internationally recognized borders.

As in previous sessions, the sixty-sixth session of General Assembly will address the embargo imposed on Cuba, which violates the rules of international free trade. In spite of the timid steps taken towards normalizing the situation, Angola reiterates its position of principle by reaffirming the need to end the embargo against Cuba.

Angola has been making its contribution to finding solutions to the most pressing problems. Within the broader international community, we have sought to cooperate with all countries based on mutual respect and interests, upholding the highest ideals of peace and cooperation for development. We will continue on this path, firmly believing that the defence and promotion of these principles contribute to the development and advancement of all peoples.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. John M. Silk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Silk (Marshall Islands): On behalf of President Jurelang Zedkaia, I bring warm greetings from the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the General Assembly. The Marshall Islands also welcomes South Sudan as the newest Member of the Organization.

The Marshall Islands congratulates the Secretary-General for making nuclear disarmament and nuclear safety a top priority at the United Nations during his second term. Fifty-seven years ago, at the dawn of the Cold War, the United Nations held the Marshallese people in trust. Marshallese leaders petitioned the United Nations to put a halt to the testing of nuclear weapons. The United Nations responded with Trusteeship Council resolutions 1082 (XIV), adopted in 1954, and 1493 (XVII), adopted in 1956. Acting with assurances of our protection, the United Nations and its administering authority, the United States, detonated 67 large-scale nuclear explosions in the Marshall Islands. For decades, Marshallese leaders have returned to the United Nations to speak of the continuing impacts — cancer, fear and continued exile from our homeland — and of a science where goalposts are always moving.

Three weeks ago, the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum, in their communiqué, not only recognized the special responsibility of the United States of America but also agreed to support the Marshall Islands at the United Nations, including in addressing the issue of the Secretary-General's report. The United Nations has a clear responsibility to acknowledge and address the consequences of nuclear testing undertaken under its watch — and a special responsibility has already been acknowledged by the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Last year, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the effects of atomic radiation in the Marshall Islands. Such a report would represent the potential for the Marshall Islands, the United States and the United Nations to take a very positive step forward towards understanding our past, bringing closure to this sad chapter in our history and beginning to understand how the international community can assist us in addressing future remediation challenges. The involvement of the United Nations is key.

Sadly, I am concerned that the Secretary-General has thus far neglected this critical opportunity. The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, which was invited to contribute to the Secretary-General's efforts to assemble a report, has termed the General Assembly's deliberate mandate to be "not appropriate" and "an apparent error" in need of formal correction (*A/66/46, para. 13*).

That is not only insensitive but it reveals that perhaps the United Nations itself has yet to come to terms with, or even to merely acknowledge, its decisions on nuclear safety taken 60 years ago. That negative approach could preclude efforts to bring to the attention of this body important scientific work that has been done in assessing the consequences of the nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands.

It is our hope that United Nations will have the courage and will to rise above the past and make a difference, rather than allow itself to remain controlled by history, and make excuses. As I said earlier, for decades, Marshallese leaders have returned to the United Nations to repeatedly speak of the legacy of the nuclear testing in our country. It is my hope that one day a new generation of Marshallese leaders will come to this forum not to speak of this sad legacy, but rather to proclaim that the work is done and that all is well.

The impacts of nuclear testing are not the only historical legacy from international actors in the Marshall Islands. Unexploded ordnance from the Second World War and oil leakage are persistent issues for our outer island communities. They pose threats to our human security, public health and environmental safety. We welcome the attention of Pacific Island Forum leaders, and we join the call for assistance from international bodies and development partners.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is not just a small island State; we are a large ocean nation.

Together, the oceanscape of the Pacific islands is an area that covers 10 per cent of the world's surface and is four times the size of Europe. The way we manage our maritime space is therefore a central pillar in our basic development aspirations, and has significant implications for the health of global oceans.

International commitments to ensure sustainable fisheries and to visibly advance our development aspirations can no longer be paid mere lip service and then later be ignored by our partners in regional processes, including the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. The Marshall Islands presently only sees a penny of benefit for every dollar of the market value of our Pacific tuna. The conservation measures by the parties to the Nauru Agreement, including the Vessel Day Scheme and high seas closures, must be implemented by our partners, not only to reduce pressure on overfished stocks but also to ensure our rightful place as a full economic actor.

Twenty years ago, global leaders meeting at Rio de Janeiro set forward a high international benchmark for sustainable development, crafting a range of strategies and commitments. Next year, the critical United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development must not only focus on moving towards a global green economy but must also pay specific attention to a global "blue economy" — one that ensures specific, measurable and time-bound targets for guaranteeing the sustainability of the global oceans and their fish stocks, particularly in regions dotted by small island States like my own. Greater commitment is needed to utilize targeted global high seas closures, thereby ensuring sustainable fisheries, as we are already doing in the Pacific. The hour is past for vague rhetoric. Leaders must respond with action rather than continued neglect for the world's oceans.

The Marshall Islands warmly welcomed the visit this month by the Secretary-General to the Pacific region. The Secretary-General was able to see for himself the vulnerability and existential threat facing low-lying island States. He has now rightfully challenged world leaders to respond. What were once theoretical and distant risks are now on the verge of becoming our reality.

International climate negotiations are at serious risk of entering a phase of political stalemate. Negotiators have spent more than two decades in complicated processes that have delivered very little in terms of practical action to mitigate the climate change problem. Often blocked by only a handful of countries, the international community is still unable to commit to emissions cuts and targets sufficient to ensure the survival of the Marshall Islands and other low-lying nations.

The Marshall Islands can wait no longer. We are now choosing creative paths to drive urgency into our broken negotiations and to pursue practical initiatives to address the threats and risks. First, the Marshall Islands joined with the Government of Mexico in urging the United Nations in its coming Climate Change Conference to consider the use of voting as a means of last resort. Secondly, in July, we joined with our Pacific small island developing States colleagues to push for the Security Council to recognize that climate change now poses an incontrovertible threat to international peace and security.

We reiterate our call for the Secretary-General to report on those threats. Petty arguments about forums and mandates cannot be allowed to prevail at the risk of our statehood. All organs of the United Nations must now be proactively engaged. We do not need sympathy; we need solutions and political innovation.

Thirdly, the Marshall Islands is carefully studying options for clarifying the relevant international obligations related to climate change and how it affects our statehood. Working with our close neighbour, the Republic of Palau, we are committed to pursuing requests for legal advisory opinions from international tribunals in order to recognize the international legal principles that address questions of our survival and security in the context of climate risks. We have also agreed to work with Palau and other vulnerable and low-lying countries to formulate and advance our own legally binding climate agreement. We, the most vulnerable, must act when others lack the political will to do so.

As a significant global economic leader, Taiwan can make substantial contributions to the international community. The Republic of the Marshall Islands welcomes increased dialogue on key cross-Strait issues. That progress deserves recognition by the international community. Given that the primary purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace, the world cannot afford to overlook Taiwan's strong efforts in promoting peace

and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, including with regard to climate change.

The 2009 invitation by the World Health Organization for Taiwan to participate as an observer has not only benefited global medical progress, including on non-communicable diseases, but also serves as an effective model for its wider participation in other key organizations. We urge the United Nations and its Member States to consider that model and develop effective means for Taiwan's participation in specialized agencies, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the International Civil Aviation Organization.

The Security Council must transform itself into an effective and contemporary body. The Security Council should be restructured to accommodate those nations whose size, leadership and responsibility, in particular the Group of Four — Japan, Germany, India and Brazil — warrants a permanent presence in the Council. Further efforts should be made to ensure that Africa and small nations, including island States, have improved access and an amplified voice.

The General Assembly witnessed a historic moment last week, in which, for the first time, the general debate was initiated by a woman, namely, President Rousseff of Brazil. The Marshall Islands welcomes the Secretary-General's renewed priority on addressing gender, including a strengthened UN-Women institution, particularly in the Pacific.

The message for nuclear weapons, global security and climate change is the same: international law is not an empty promise.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Antoine Gambi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Gambi (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to convey to the President, on behalf of His Excellency Army General François Bozizé, Head of State and President of the Central African Republic, who it is my honour to represent here, our heartfelt congratulations on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. He can rest assured of our full readiness to cooperate with him to ensure the success of his challenging task. I would also like to pay well-deserved tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, for the talent and dedication that he demonstrated as he steered our work throughout the sixty-fifth session of the Assembly. To His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, I convey my heartfelt congratulations on his reappointment to the head of the Organization.

Lastly, the Central African Republic welcomes the admission of South Sudan, a brotherly neighbouring country, as the 193rd Member State of the United Nations.

In proposing "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes through peaceful means" as the central theme of the general debate of the sixty-sixth session of the Assembly, the President has placed our deliberations at the very heart of those problems that are of current concern to the international community. It must be recalled that the maintenance of international peace and security around the world continues to be the primary mission of the Organization, and that, for Member States, mediation continues to be an indispensable tool in the peaceful settlement of conflicts. The Central African Republic remains committed to the principles of the United Nations Charter, which enshrines language pertaining to the peaceful settlement of conflicts — principally through mediation and prevention.

The international community faces many challenges to which we need to provide tailored responses in order to together build a better world.

We attach particular attention to the issue of climate change and the environment. Protecting the environment and combating climate change are major challenges, as well a priority for the international community, given the many and varied risks that they pose to ecosystems and economies.

The commemoration, next year, of the twentieth anniversary of the first Earth Summit on sustainable development will be devoted to forests. Tropical forests, including those in the Central African Republic, are exposed to various harmful and destructive activities associated with the pressure exerted by social problems and natural disasters. The countries concerned have recognized the need to formulate land-use policies in order to conserve their biodiversity, both in terms of flora and fauna, in these regions.

Furthermore, the drought that is currently afflicting the Horn of Africa, where approximately

12 million human lives are threatened, is a source of major concern and requires broad-scale mobilization by the international community.

That brings me to the issue of food security. The Central African Republic will support a draft resolution on food development, some provisions of which would be incorporated in the various resolutions of the Assembly and in other United Nations meetings throughout the year.

Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament remain a priority. The Central African Republic welcomes the renewed interest in disarmament on the part of the international community. Greatly concerned by the nuclear threat to all of humankind, non-nuclear-weapon States are entitled to call upon those who possess nuclear weapons to fully shoulder their responsibilities by implementing specific measures to bring about genuine nuclear disarmament. For its part, the Central African Republic will spare no effort to support any United Nations initiative to that end.

Today, terrorism remains a scourge of the international community. In resolution 1963 (2010), the Security Council declared its intent to hold a special meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) on 28 September 2011, open to all United Nations Member States, to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of its resolution 1373 (2001) establishing the CTC. It should be recalled that the CTC has done a great deal in assisting Member States in undertaking actions to combat this scourge by strengthening the implementation of standards and border controls, as well as in the fight against the financing of terrorism.

The Central African Republic remains committed to the universal values of human rights, democracy and good governance. We reaffirm our commitment to working throughout this sixty-sixth session with the other Members of the United Nations to provide responses that uphold those values.

The fight against impunity and against violations of human rights is a given for our community. We hope to see it placed within an overall approach that does not hinder the process of political crisis and conflict resolution around the world or undermine regional and international efforts provided for by the United Nations Charter.

The Central African Republic attaches special importance to the reform of this Organization and all its bodies with regard to their structures, modes of operation and work methods. For this reason, we remain committed to the African position regarding the Security Council. Indeed, in all the ongoing crises in the world, the Security Council has gradually imposed the authority of the United Nations, placing it at the service of international peace and security. Its action is and remains legitimate. Its authority will be further strengthened when we reach an agreement on its expansion, which will enable us to take the emergence of new Powers into account by giving a more equitable place to all continents.

Like many African States, my country has been engaged on the path towards democratic governance since the 1990s. As part of our democratic process, we have endeavoured to improve the management of public policy on the political, economic and social fronts. We are aware that much remains to be done in these spheres.

The renewed trust of the Central African in His Excellency General of the Army François Bozizé Yangouvonda, President of the Republic and Head of State, has given him the opportunity to pursue the successful task he began on 15 March 2003. We are determined to break with instability and at long last to turn the page on political-military upheavals. That will enable him to focus on reconstruction. In other words, we will do everything to consolidate that peace that guarantees enduring development. Without peace and security, there can be no economic development that benefits the population as a whole.

It is from this standpoint that the Central African Government held a round table in Brussels with our development partners on 16 and 17 June in order to raise the awareness of the international community with respect to the funding needs of the programmes outlined in the second poverty reduction strategy paper.

The matter of security remains at the very heart of our concerns. Part of the population of the Central African Republic continues to suffer the aggression of rebels belonging to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) of Joseph Kony. The activity of the LRA, a cruel and barbaric rebellion from a country that shares no borders with the Central African Republic, remains the source of atrocities, destruction, looting, rape, forced recruitment and the deportation of men, women and children. Mobilization on all sides and the shared

allocation of resources are needed to eradicate that scourge once and for all.

The Government of the Central African Republic greatly appreciates the initiatives of the United Nations, the African Union and the United States on this issue. We continue to believe that the Republic of South Sudan will join other affected countries in this relentless struggle against a cross-border enemy that harbours vague ambitions harmful to the stability required for development of our subregion.

The December 2010 withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad left a security vacuum that my country is trying to fill despite our limited resources. The same holds true for Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic deployed by the Economic Community of Central African States, whose mandate expires at the end of December 2013.

Reinforcing the capacities of our defence and security forces, which are slated to take over from the international forces, is still far from complete. I should like here to thank the United Nations through its Peacebuilding Fund, which has been supporting the Central African Republic in its tireless quest for peace and stability.

In the light of all this, I appeal once again to the international community to take urgent action in order to build peace and prevent conflict in the Central African Republic. We welcome in advance all commitments that have been or will be made on our behalf. We are convinced that the dividends of those efforts will benefit both the Central African Republic, which lies at the heart of the African continent, and the entire subregion.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Surujrattan Rambachan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communications of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Rambachan (Trinidad and Tobago): Mr. President, I congratulate Mr. Al-Nasser on his election to preside over the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, and extend the best wishes of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and of the Government and people of my country, on whose behalf I address the Assembly.

I also welcome South Sudan as the newest Member of the United Nations.

More than six decades ago, the United Nations was established, among other things, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, promote social progress and better standards of life in greater freedom, and employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

Notwithstanding instances of conflicts that have threatened to reverse the gains achieved since 1945, the United Nations, with the support of Member States, has achieved some success in maintaining international peace and security. An important ingredient fuelling this success has been the promotion by the United Nations of the principle of the settlement of disputes through pacific or peaceful means.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is very supportive of the President's choice of the theme for this debate, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means". It provides, in our view, an opportunity for members of the international community to reaffirm their commitment to this important principle, which is not only enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations but also widely accepted as forming part of customary international law.

The Charter is the primary legal instrument governing the conduct of international relations among States. Indeed, Article 33 imposes a binding legal obligation on parties to disputes to settle them first of all through peaceful means. Under Chapter VII, the Security Council is also required, as a first resort, to use peaceful means to resolve disputes that constitute threats to peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression.

We meet at a time when peoples everywhere are seeking more direct roles in the governance of their societies; when they are not prepared to be silent spectators to their plight; when ordinary, law-abiding citizens are prepared to die for the cause of freedom from tyranny and for democracy; when leadership that is anything less than democratic is unacceptable; when social media have united the peoples of the world into a global community with one aspiration — the dignity of the human person; and when the hunger of the souls of peoples of many nations for democracy cannot be appeased by false promises of a distant utopia. Above all, we are witnessing levels of youth alienation and restlessness that challenge leaders to bridge the gap between old cultures and traditions of governance with

new aspirations. There will be no future that is peaceful unless the cynicism of the young is addressed.

Developments in the Middle East and in North Africa reveal a global growing dissonance among the masses with regimes that trample on the freedoms fundamental to democracy and do not allow for participation in governance. In a world linked by social media, the risk of a people's uprising that transcends continents and borders is real. It is a kind of social chaos that as leaders we must all prevent. If we do not, the gains we have made will be lost and a kind of anarchy could be set in motion.

What are the reasons for all of this? They have to do with the perception of a denial that people feel exists today. That denial is political in nature in terms of shared governance; it is also material in nature, as it relates to the way people feel about how resources are allocated in their countries; it is also spiritual in nature, because of the general emptiness that people feel when it comes to realizing their human potential.

Politically, the age of totalitarianism and anti-democratic leadership styles is over. When it comes to the use of their countries' material resources, people wish to see more equitable distribution and application in ways that improve basic standards of living. The ability to eat even a single meal or to receive basic health care, education, affordable public transport and housing is today at the top of the list of people's priorities. As leaders of the world, we must stop and we must answer. Now more than ever, the world must allocate its resources equitably, ethically, sustainably and transparently.

While we at the United Nations generally talk about mediation as settling differences among nations, perhaps the real mediation has to be between generations. Leaders must now adopt styles of leadership that embrace active listening to the views of those governed. Leaders must develop approaches that build consensus and promote participation, since people now demand a greater say in how their futures are shaped. They want to author that future, not be dictated to. They want to arrive at a destiny that they have shaped, not one that is shaped for them.

The defeat of economic and social demons will come about only when there is unity of purpose, nationally and globally — a reality that is possible only when the energies of all stakeholders are harnessed around a common vision. A common vision cannot be fostered when conflicts, internal or external, are allowed to fester. This results in the further alienation of people who often resort to violence and socially disruptive behaviour to solve disputes.

Trinidad and Tobago has always advocated the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. This is based on our support for an international order founded on respect for the rule of law. In this regard, we hold sacred the territorial sovereignty of States and the inalienable human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals. We also view the promotion of justice as indispensable to the maintenance of peace and security at the national, regional and global levels. Nevertheless, none of these objectives would be attainable if there were no systems encouraging Member States to settle disputes peacefully. That is why we have always been vociferous in our support of the work of the International Criminal Court and other tribunals established to promote peace by dispensing justice.

Trinidad and Tobago relies heavily for its economic development on the exploration and exploitation of the living and mineral resources of the maritime zones within our national jurisdiction. In doing this, we have had to delimit our maritime boundaries with neighbouring coastal States in accordance with the relevant provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other applicable rules of international law. I can assure the Assembly that this has been done by peaceful means, either through diplomatic negotiations or by arbitration pursuant to the provisions of annex VII of the Convention.

Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the importance of the need to settle disputes by peaceful means. Consequently, we have become parties to several conventions for settling commercial and investment disputes. These have been given the force of law in our jurisdiction. For example, our 1996 Foreign Arbitral Awards Act gives effect to Trinidad and Tobago's obligations under the 1958 Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards. Additionally, as a State party to the Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of Other States, we also recognize that, like States, foreign nationals who invest in Trinidad and Tobago must be in a position to avail themselves of the conciliation and arbitration services provided by the International Centre for Settlement of

Investment Disputes, which is an impartial international forum for resolving potential investment disputes. Such treaties not only provide the requisite reassurance for investors, who know that any dispute that may arise will be settled through an objective process; they also serve as incentives for would-be investors to do business in Trinidad and Tobago.

We in Trinidad and Tobago support the position taken by the International Court of Justice and the International Law Commission that all Member States are bound to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. It is for these reasons that we have always upheld the position that border disputes in our region or any part of the globe should be settled peacefully. It will be recalled that as far back as 1970, Trinidad and Tobago, through the good offices of our former Prime Minister, the late Mr. Eric Williams, facilitated the conclusion of the Protocol of Port-of-Spain, whereby Guyana and Venezuela agreed to a 12-year moratorium on their border dispute.

Since then, Trinidad and Tobago has supported other initiatives mounted by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organization of American States and the United Nations aimed at resolving this dispute by peaceful means. Elsewhere in our region, we have encouraged the use of good offices and mediation to resolve the border dispute between Belize and Guyana, as well as internal disputes in Haiti. Our support for these regional initiatives is in keeping with the provisions of Article 52 of the Charter, which envisions a role for regional organizations in the pacific settlement of disputes.

Further afield, we have always advocated that the Middle East conflict should be settled peacefully. Trinidad and Tobago supports the quest of Palestinians for a State of their own with secure borders, alongside the State of Israel, whose borders must also be secure and free from terrorist attacks. The United Nations must continue to show leadership and work with the Arab League and other entities to resolve the decades-old conflict between Israel and Palestine so that there can be lasting peace in the region. For far too long, we, like the rest of the world, have witnessed the horrendous loss of life and destruction of infrastructure which have erased the hopes and prospects of many young people for a bright future in the place of their birth.

The efforts of States at the national or regional levels for the settlement of disputes emphasize their primary responsibility under the Charter to settle disputes peacefully. These are supplementary to and reinforce the role of the United Nations as mandated under the Charter. Trinidad and Tobago therefore welcomes the renewed emphasis placed by the United Nations on mediation and other means for the peaceful settlement of disputes, as demonstrated in the report of the Secretary-General dated 8 April 2009 (S/2009/189), as well as the adoption on 22 June 2011 by the General Assembly of its resolution 65/283, entitled "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution".

During her contribution to the general debate last year (see A/65/PV.20), The Honourable Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, took the political initiative to call on the General Assembly to adopt a resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. That resolution, which was eventually adopted by the Assembly as resolution 65/69, calls on States to promote the equitable representation of women in all decision-making processes with regard to matters related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

One year later, the United Nations continues to make strides in placing women at the centre of all of its activities. This has been reflected, for example, in the establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Consistent with this action, Trinidad and Tobago applauds the decision taken by Member States in resolution 65/283, which recognizes the importance of the full and effective participation of women at all levels, at all stages and in all aspects of the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, as well as the need to address the lack of women as chief or lead peace mediators.

Women are among the most vulnerable during conflicts, internal or otherwise, and hence must be involved in all vehicles relating to the settlement of disputes and conflict prevention. The absence of women in the process could result in the development of peace agreements which are not comprehensive in

scope and which may not address those issues that affect women during periods of conflict and which continue thereafter.

The inclusion of women in the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention is related to their involvement in the political process. Women, in whatever part of the world, must not be left out of the political decision-making process. The Honourable Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago continues to demonstrate her commitment to the participation of women in Government in meaningful ways, both nationally and internationally. Her advocacy with respect to this issue resulted in the hosting in Trinidad and Tobago in 2011 of regional seminars to promote this democratic and just cause.

Bearing in mind the significance of this subject, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, together with other States, the United Nations Development Programme and UN-Women, successfully co-hosted a high-level colloquium on women's political participation last Monday in the margins of the General Assembly. It was gratifying and fulfilling to see a room overflowing with women from all over the world championing the common cause of gender equality. The event clearly demonstrated that the small size of a country is not a deterrent to the realization of big dreams and the fulfilment of wholesome ideals in the pursuit of human development.

As part of the colloquium, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago was among those leaders who signed a declaration on advancing women's political participation. It is the hope of Trinidad and Tobago that the outcome of this event will promote greater global consciousness and discussions on the participation of women in Government and the advancement of democracy globally. In keeping with the objective of this meeting, Trinidad and Tobago calls on Member States to implement the provisions of resolution 65/283 on the inclusion of women as mediators in the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention. At the same time, we would also welcome greater efforts to recruit lead mediators from developing countries and from small countries, particularly small island developing States, including in the Caribbean, consistent with the principle of equitable geographic distribution in the recruitment of United Nations personnel.

Like women, our young people are also very susceptible to the negative effects of strife and therefore they, too, must be protected. A number of cases before the International Criminal Court (ICC) show that the perpetrators are on trial or under investigation for committing war crimes because they conscripted or enlisted children under the age of 15 into their national armed forces or used them to participate actively in hostilities. In addition to mechanisms aimed at bringing the accused to justice, we support all those aimed at rehabilitating young people who have survived conflict so that they can advance, reach their fullest potential and contribute to the development of their societies. This can be achieved if they are able to enjoy their basic human rights. Thus we call on States that are in a position to do so to contribute to UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the ICC Trust Fund for Victims, which assist in the rehabilitation of children and other victims of armed conflict.

Trinidad and Tobago endorses a number of other elements contained in resolution 65/283 relating to the strengthening of the position of the United Nations in assisting States to develop their capacity to employ mediation and other peaceful means to resolve disputes. While the adoption of the resolution is laudable, it is only a means to an end. Member States must ensure that all aspects of the resolution are implemented fully. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to underscore the importance of the provision of adequate resources to the Department of Political Affairs and its Mediation Support Unit. Without the required resources, the Secretary-General will not be able to effectively use his good offices and other mediation capacities to help resolve existing and future disputes.

The escalation of armed conflict and armed violence is fuelled by several factors. One component is the illegal proliferation of conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons which have been diverted from the legal market to the illicit trade. The United Nations, in keeping with its obligations under the Charter to promote and maintain international peace and security, has recognized the impact of the illegal trade in conventional arms on the peace and security of countries and regions and has adopted several resolutions and implemented different programmes to address this matter.

But for us in Trinidad and Tobago and the CARICOM region, the most ambitious measure undertaken so far is the decision to convene a conference in July 2012 to negotiate the text of an arms trade treaty. Trinidad and Tobago and its CARICOM partners have been very active in the deliberations of meetings of the Preparatory Committee examining possible elements for inclusion in the treaty. As we approach the 2012 conference and begin to reflect on items to be included in the agreement, considerable care must also be taken to ensure that there are adequate provisions for the settlement of disputes which may arise among future States parties on the interpretation and application of the provisions of the arms trade treaty.

The absence of peaceful means to resolve conflicts has led to genocide, war crimes and other pernicious misdeeds of concern to the international community. In many cases, they have stymied economic growth and social progress and have destroyed human lives. They have limited the capacity of many States in conflict, especially those in the developing world, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We must save current and future generations from the plague of war brought about by intolerance, xenophobia, border disputes and disagreements over the allocation of resources. We in Trinidad and Tobago feel that a concrete way of doing this — an intervention strategy — is to focus, as my country is focusing, on universal preschool education, because we believe that the human values that are inculcated in children from birth until ages 5 or 6 help them to appreciate the value of peace and the value of interpersonal peace.

Additionally, the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations must address the impatience and restlessness of today's young people, who are fed up with the misallocation of resources and the lack of both transparency and peoples' involvement in the processes of governance. Their desires to reshape the world to reflect greater participation, empathy and democratic principles ought not be ignored by leaders. We are convinced that those aspirations will be achieved if mediation and other peaceful means of solving disputes, among other strategies, are adopted — and not just among nations, but among individuals and internally within countries.

Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to working with regional partners, the United Nations and other actors to promote global peace. We must strengthen our capacity to use mediation, complemented by the introduction of new approaches to Government and governance, such as the greater participation of women and a desire to build consensus.

We believe that unless leaders listen more, unless we employ mediation to resolve disputes, unless we incorporate our disenfranchised women in governance, unless we listen to the real message of today about greater participation in governance, and unless we realize that humankind has common challenges as it addresses issues like climate change, then the world will have missed a golden opportunity to advance the cause of humankind and promote global peace.

Let us therefore endeavour to resolve our common global challenges, for to do otherwise would be to fail succeeding generations of humankind, for which we who meet here today will never be forgiven nor forgotten.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gilbert Saboya Sunyé, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Institutional Relations of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Saboya Sunyé (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalán; English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his well-deserved reappointment, and Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session.

It is with pride, a sense of responsibility and a will for cooperation and proactivity that I address this Hall in the name of the Principality of Andorra and the Government that I have the honour to represent. The United Nations and the system of international law that emanates from it place all States on an equal footing. That is especially important for States like Andorra, small in terms of territorial dimension but large in values and in history.

Recent years have been marked by a profound crisis of multiple aspects — economic, social, environmental and political — but most especially a crisis of values. Now that we must all lay the foundation for recovery, we need to be quite clear about the values and principles on which we wish to continue constructing the world. We do not need to go much further than the founding spirit of the General

Assembly, an institution in which all — large and small, the wealthier and the less endowed — address one another on equal terms to promote peace, liberty and justice.

Just as the United Nations arose after a world war that turned the world as it had existed until then upside down, now again we have to be able to define the moral and political bases of a new order. One priority set by the United Nations is inclusive and sustainable development. There can be no sustainability without inclusion. And if the Assembly, which arose from the debris of a devastating war, is to give a voice to all the peoples of the planet, we have to be capable now of ensuring that no one is excluded from the future that we forge together.

We must take care that the economic recovery from the recession does not further accentuate the inequalities — understood as a lack of equity — that already exist. Thus, just as international law protects nations like ours that have no military potential, so too economic growth must be especially attentive to the more vulnerable in order to prevent the consequences of the recession from falling systematically on them.

Thirty years ago, in 1981, the United Nations held its first Conference on the Least Developed Countries. The fourth Conference was held last spring, attesting to the difficulty of achieving significant changes to improve the weakness and vulnerability of those States. Further, we observe with concern how, against the background of the global recession, some of the more developed countries often adopt protectionist attitudes. On the conviction that a freer world is a more just world, we also have to state that a more open and less protectionist world leads to a more equitable balance and improvements for the disadvantaged.

Andorra, with its small scale, secular stability and seclusion among mountains, is dealing with the far-reaching process of opening its economy. We also have planned the construction of a model of inclusive growth that leaves no one out — a model that cannot be constructed by turning one's back on the international community or by being isolated from the world.

I have been talking about economic opening, but the opening to the world cannot be strictly economic, and it is crystal clear that recovery from the crisis and a new phase of growth will not come about solely as a result of economic measures. The search for an inclusive and sustainable balance must necessarily involve addressing factors that are not strictly economic but that do accentuate inequalities between countries.

In that connection, we note the work done at the 2011 High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on AIDS held in June and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (resolution 65/277) adopted by the participating States, stating their intension to intensify their efforts in the fight against this pandemic. In spite of the advances achieved in recent years, HIV is a symbol of how necessary it is for progress to reach everyone equally. While in the more developed countries AIDS has become a chronic illness appropriately treated, in the more disadvantaged areas — especially in sub-Saharan Africa — the disease is still lethal, especially in the communities with the fewest resources.

Above and beyond the increase of resources for research and treatment and greater North-South cooperation, I am convinced that the extension of democracy and human rights is also a key factor in the fight against a pandemic that overwhelms the poorest, but that also hits peoples submerged in ignorance and oppression.

With all of that, the extent of the commitments made and the progress achieved by various States in the fight against HIV should be a source of satisfaction, since seldom has the international community been capable of articulating a response so rapid and unanimous when faced with a threat on this scale. It would be wonderful if the same level of awareness and commitment could be achieved in the fight against non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes. Those also — although perhaps not so clearly as in the case of AIDS — are diseases that accentuate the inequalities among countries. That principle was recognized in the Political Declaration (resolution 66/2) of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases held recently.

Such successes cannot allow us to forget that one of the most serious challenges facing the international community and this Assembly, which is its highest representation, is the fight against climate change. To date, humankind was used to overcoming recessions and times of crisis, entering a new phase of growth,

without thinking of the negative external effects of that growth. We now know that growth cannot be at any price and that development must be sustainable in economic terms, but also, and more particularly, in environmental terms.

That is why the threat of climate change is as great as or stronger than that of the global recession. Some developed countries, in particular those that survive on their own natural resources, are seriously threatened by climate change. That may also be the case for Andorra, which bases a good part of its economic welfare on snow and mountain tourism. That is why we will always support any initiative aiming at greater awareness of the need to combat climate change, and take steps to adapt to what is probably already a reality. In that context, we should underscore the entry into force in Andorra of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on 31 May.

We should never lose sight of the fact that the main goal of the United Nations is to guarantee peace and security in a context of freedom and respect for human rights. Just as in the past, States emerged to ensure the social peace and individual freedom of their citizens, the United Nations also have their raison d'être in the maintenance of peace and security and the rule of international law.

Today, we speak of inclusive and sustainable economic growth and of a new and profound awareness of the threat of climate change. We cannot forget that such issues are closely linked to the promotion of a safer world. Growth that leaves more vulnerable groups behind and that excludes the least developed countries, added to the effects of climate change, leads to a less safe and less stable world.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the tragic attacks of 11 September here in New York, the seat of United Nations Headquarters. As President Obama recalled last Wednesday (see A/66/PV.11), we are today seeing the symbol of New York's renewal rise at ground zero, where 10 years ago there was an open wound and twisted steel, a shattered heart in the centre of the city.

This year, we close the first decade of the millennium without having resolved the threat to the security of our world, that is, international terrorism. Despite progress on that front, the threat continues. Terrorism arises from hatred and wickedness. However, we must be aware that it dwells, in particular, where there is a lack of economic prospects, illiteracy, lack of culture, poverty, marginality — where, in short, there is a lack of democracy.

That is why, in the promotion of a safer world, our efforts will always be needed to combat all kinds of discrimination. In that regard, I wish to underscore the political declaration against racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia and related intolerance that was adopted at that time during the General Assembly. It is also 10 years since the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Today, as the States represented here, we say that we cannot afford to lower our guard since, in an increasingly globalized and complex world, the threat of discrimination is growing.

At the beginning of my statement, I spoke of the need to continue building the world on the principles and values that inspire this Assembly. Allow me now to recall the spirit and the philosophy of the twenty-eighth President of the United States, President Wilson, father of the League of Nations, the precursor of today's United Nations. Wilson taught us that it was of little use to be democrats at home if we were not capable of exporting democracy beyond our borders, and that a State that turned its back on countries still living under oppression and in which the most fundamental rights and freedoms were not respected could not presume to be democratic.

That is why we must welcome with an especially positive attitude what we have called the Arab Spring. We sincerely hope that those movements for democracy strengthen in the future. In that context, in July, we supported South Sudan becoming the 193rd member of the United Nations. Today, we are pleased at that reality and we most warmly welcome it. A more democratic world is a more dynamic world, but also safer because it is fairer. Most failures of security in our world, as I said a moment ago, are fuelled by injustice.

Likewise, with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we must keep encouraging dialogue and mediation. The Palestinian people's aspiration to have a democratic and peaceful State is as legitimate as the Israeli desire to obtain guarantees for its existence and security. The final aim of a mutual recognition of two States by two peoples, on the basis of the 1967 lines with the agreed and equivalent exchanges, is now under discussion.

A possible intermediate step, in a shorter term, by becoming an observer State could represent an element of hope for the Palestinian people, provided that it is not used for purposes that are incompatible with continuing negotiations, but for the aforementioned goal. Israel also must contribute to that spirit, avoiding attitudes that could affect the final status.

Andorra is a country that has lived for more than 700 years without an army, without taking part in any war and without internal conflicts. The perpetual peace and permanent stability, of which we Andorrans are proud, is not founded on an autocratic regime that controls its people with an iron fist or on a whim resulting from the deterrence of larger or more powerful neighbours. No, the ultimate reason for a peace and security maintained for more than seven centuries has been the ongoing effort to respect individual rights and freedoms and the rule of justice and of fairness, and the existence of mechanisms of solidarity, as was well demonstrated in the recent universal periodic review.

Our democracy and our centuries-old parliamentary system are not the fruit of peace and stability, but the reverse. Peace, security and stability are the fruits of democracy because, without democracy, there is no possibility of peace or lasting security either in Andorra or anywhere in the world.

From the position of humility that governs our support for the United Nations, we wish to reaffirm here the idea of commitment as a fundamental value and the linchpin of our political action. That commitment is understood as a deep belief not only in peace and equal opportunities, but also as an involvement in and shouldering of individual responsibilities regarding a common project and, last but not least, as a wish for dialogue and understanding. On Wednesday, President Sarkozy stated in this Assembly: "Let us choose the path of compromise, which is neither renunciation nor repudiation, but which allows us to move forward, step by step" (*A/66/PV.11*). Andorra will continue to work towards such a commitment within the Organization.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Several representatives have requested to exercise their right of reply. I wish to remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for second interventions, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mostahkam (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today, the representative of the United Arab Emirates referred in his remarks to three Iranian Islands located in the Persian Gulf. My delegation would like to make it clear that those islands are an eternal part of Iranian territory and are under the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran. As such, we regret the use of inappropriate qualifications for these Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, while stressing its determination to continue its friendly relations with the neighbouring United Arab Emirates, reiterates that all actions and measures taken on the Iranian island of Abu Musa have been in exercise of its sovereign rights and in accordance with the arrangements emanating from the documents exchanged in 1971. The Islamic Republic of Iran stands ready to continue its bilateral talks with relevant officials of the United Arab Emirates with a view to removing any misunderstanding that may exist in this regard.

Moreover, the Islamic Republic of Iran wishes to stress that the only correct and historically and universally recognized name for the sea between Iran and the Arabian peninsula is, as the United Nations has itself also emphasized, the Persian Gulf. Therefore, any use of fabricated names for that body of water is totally groundless, absolutely unacceptable and of no legal, geographical or political value.

Mr. Salem (Egypt): My delegation has requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply to the utterly false allegations made by the Foreign Minister of Canada against Egypt. We would advise the Foreign Minister to follow closely the events that took place during the 25 January revolution in Egypt and the social solidarity it set as an example to the entire world.

He should note that Muslims and Copts stood together, side by side, during that revolution and remained so thereafter. Since 25 January, no Copt has been harassed and no church been trespassed. We are not surprised that those false allegations come from Canada which, among other things, baselessly considers itself a custodian of human rights in the world, making false accusations against sovereign countries without carefully studying the true facts or the conditions and circumstances surrounding them.

Mr. Al-Yafei (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I find myself compelled to exercise my right of reply in response to the representative of Iran, who spoke a few minutes ago, misleading the Assembly about his country's occupation of three islands belonging to the Emirates: the Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa. I will also address the false, void and illegal allegations made about those islands.

My Government has repeatedly made known its established, principled position vis-à-vis its national cause and reiterates its severe disappointment at the repeated allegations made by the representatives of Iran annually in this Hall to the effect that their country's occupation of the three islands that belong to my country is a misunderstanding.

That position flies in the face of all documentation and all historic, demographic and legal facts and realities that prove that the three islands are an integral part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates and its national sovereignty, and that they are also part of the continental shelf, air space and exclusive economic zone of the Emirates. These facts are indivisible and cannot be diminished.

Therefore, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law, my country reiterates its categorical rejection of the Iranian occupation and all military and civilian measures that Iran continues to adopt with a view to changing the demographic and historic nature of the islands, consolidating their occupation and circumventing the question of occupation by invoking marginal issues that are the result of its occupation of the islands, without addressing the issue of the occupation itself.

We hope that the international community will act to urge the Muslim Iranian Government to translate its good and peaceful intentions into deeds, whether through unconditional bilateral negotiations between the two countries or by petitioning the International Court of Justice for a legal opinion on this matter. That would put an end to the occupation of the three islands and return them to the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates.

The meeting rose at 9.20 p.m.